

User Awareness Can Prevent Icy Surroundings

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Many threats you can recognize instantly. For example the drunk driver careening towards you, the group of armed men forming on a nearby rooftop, a snarling dog with its ears back or your sister-in-law and her eight kids pulling into your driveway. Well, maybe the in-law and her brood are not really threats, but at least you can see them coming. Cyber threats are more insidious. They can surprise you like high blood pressure or a spot inspection.

That's why all the information and training on Information Assurance (IA) is worth the time and effort to learn and remember. A cyber attack or the loss of secure data can happen in an instant. If you're not prepared, you could be in serious trouble. Secure data loss not only has the potential of negatively affecting you, but your coworkers and your fellow warfighters as well.

AR 25-2 may not be an exciting document. But what those rules and regulations cover is a key plot element in that good espionage thriller you've been reading. The time it takes to review, learn and implement that regulation is nothing compared to the time and effort it takes to recover from a cyber attack or data loss.

That's why your annual User Awareness Training mandated in AR 25-2 is worth it just to learn about recognizing and preventing current cyber threats. It's also an excellent opportunity to take in the most recent lessons learned, so that something you do doesn't turn into next year's example of negligence or ignorance.

Something else to consider is becoming an IA buddy. Help the newbies and the "forgetful" people in your workgroup or command stay on top of security risks. Don't be afraid to say "Hey Joe, you might want to take your CAC when you leave your desk" or "Jane, before you copy those files, is that thumb drive encrypted?" Most likely they will appreciate the gentle reminder. If they don't, you might point out that information assurance is not a suggestion, it's a necessity and a regulation.

When you secure your data in every way possible, not only are you protecting yourself and your co-workers, but possibly the safety of warfighters in harm's way. Failing to do so could result in cold shoulders from your peers, hot words from your superiors and very frigid surroundings at your next assignment.